

II. MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

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- 1. 4110-0001 Administrative Services**
FY '98 Funding: \$729,045
FY '99 Funding: \$614,492
Current FY 2000 Funding: \$1,024,492
FY'01 Proposed Funding: \$1,078,492
Total 1-Year Increase from FY '2000: \$ 54,000
Total Expansion from FY '98 – FY'01: \$644,894

Increase from FY '98

FY '99	\$ -0-
FY '00	\$ 295,447
FY '01	\$ 349,447

Total Expansion from FY '98

\$ -0-
\$ 295,447
\$ 644,894

In order to properly implement the significant expansions contemplated in this document, MCB would add 3 FTE's to the administrative account to address the need for additional drivers, to meet Americans with Disabilities Act responsibilities, and a contract specialist at an overall cost, including related expenses of \$100,000 in the second year annualized to \$121,000 in the third year. The agency has hired 7.8 new direct service FTE's in FY '99 in other accounts, the majority of whom are blind and require a driver accommodation to bring them to consumer's homes. This situation has exacerbated an already taxed driver pool and warrants serious consideration.

MCB has determined that the need for direct service support personnel will be more readily understandable if the request for drivers is included in a service account. Therefore, only the request for a contracts specialist at an estimated cost of \$54,000 including fringe and indirect cost charges at the current rates continues to be included in this account. The overall increase in appropriation for FY 2000 reflects an increase in rent monies needed to meet current market rates at the Commission's presently accessible location as opposed to any expansion.

- 2. 4110-1000 Community Services**
FY '98 Funding: \$2,802,718
FY '99 Funding: \$3,602,365
Current FY 2000 Funding: \$ 3,611,086
FY'01 Proposed Funding: \$ 6,168,218
Total 1-Year Increase from FY '2000: \$ 4.584,086
Total Expansion from FY '98 – FY '01:\$ 4,973,516

<u>Increase from FY '98</u>		<u>Total Expansion from FY '98</u>
FY '99	\$ 799,647	\$ 799,647
FY '00	\$ 808,369	\$1,608,016
FY '01	\$3,365,500	\$4,973,516

The services provided through this account are directed at Economic Self-Support, Self Sufficiency, Preventing or Remedying Neglect, Abuse or Exploitation, Preventing or Reducing Inappropriate Institutional Care and Securing Referral or Admission for Institutional Care as appropriate in each individual's case.

Living within the community is defined by more than maintaining existence. It is the dynamic interplay of the individual with their family, community institutions and the many contributions a person can make. In short, independence is more realistically interdependence between and among the person and the members of their community. Hence, programming from MCB aimed at providing persons who are blind with the tools and resources they will need to participate in community life is critical to their successful participation in, and contribution to, the community in which they live.

A) CHILDREN

Children who are blind require a sense of themselves as positive participants in the community experience. This must begin with an appreciation of themselves as full human beings and not as somehow tangential to the mainstream of society. In partnership with the school systems and private sector, the Commission sponsors after-school programs in six locations throughout the Commonwealth. These programs give children who are blind an opportunity to relate to each other without blindness being an issue between them, thereby decreasing the possibility for the development of chronic feelings of inferiority. This leads to a greater self-appreciation from which the capacity to more fully participate in the mainstream grows.

The goal of MCB's Children's Services program is to support the individual blind child such that he or she is positioned to achieve age-appropriate social, emotional, and academic milestones in preparation for an adult life that includes the capacity for maximum personal fulfillment and independence. While there are some 1,200 blind children in the Commonwealth between birth and age 14, current resources enable MCB to extend the benefits of this unique Socialization/Recreation program to only 90-100 of them.

Without such After School programs, many of these children will be at risk of not developing the necessary foundation to support their active participation in the community in the future. These programs need to be expanded to cover a currently underserved area, the Southeastern Massachusetts/Cape Cod area. It is believed that an additional yearly appropriation of \$25,000 in the third year would enable some 15-20 additional blind children from that area to participate and benefit.

For an estimated 100 families with blind children there is a need to provide respite assistance from time to time as a means of preserving family integrity and maximizing the ability of a child to enjoy a normalized environment and upbringing. The agency intends to provide 7,500 hours annually of respite care for these families, as necessary, throughout the 3-year expansion at an annual cost of \$112,500.

B) ELDERS

The largest portion of the Massachusetts blindness community is made up of elders, with more than 25,000 elders who are blind living within the Commonwealth. It is projected that the current trend of increasingly aged persons will produce as great a ratio as 1 in every 4 elders above the age of 85 years being legally blind. Service providers must take into account that for the vast majority of this astounding number of people, most of them will experience sight loss later in life and will have to cope with their disability at a time when learning new techniques is difficult at best, and, almost impossible without proper supports.

There are many things that can and should be done to assist these elders in regaining control and maintaining quality within their lives. Firstly, they must be provided with competent and caring assistance from trained social workers that are skilled in the areas of blindness and community integration. Therefore, the Commission would need to expand its staff with a minimum of six (6) new direct service social workers to meet the demands of this quickly growing population. These additional staff would be deployed to comprehensively assess and assist an additional 600 blind consumers to successfully adjust to blindness such that they may maintain their personal dignity and independence. This expansion would require an additional \$270,000 yearly in order to minimally address the immediate needs of this population.

Moreover, a yearly \$550,000 will be required to purchase services and equipment for blind elders to allow them to maintain independent living within their communities for as long as possible so that they may avoid institutionalization. Depending upon the individual consumer, such purchased services, in combination with MCB direct services, may include instruction in travel with a cane, learning of Braille, use of assistive devices and techniques to maintain independence in the home, peer support groups during the adjustment to blindness period, and the procurement of other goods and services aimed at maximum utilization of their remaining vision, if any.

C) NON-CHILD OR ELDER HOMEMAKER SERVICES

Between ages 18 and 60, there are approximately 9,000 adults who have a wide range of social service needs. While the vast majority of these persons benefit from MCB services to the extent that they are largely independent in homemaking and activities of daily living, there has been an increase in the numbers of persons with multiple disabilities or other functional limitations that lead them to require homemaker services. The agency has during this decade had to limit these services in most instances to 4-6 hours per week, when it has always been recognized that 6-8 hours are minimally required in order to meet basic levels of independence for this population. The agency is requesting \$60,000 in additional funds to increase its ability to serve consumers who would otherwise not be served and might well require institutionalization. This request is smaller than in the previous years, not because the need has diminished, but because provider agencies are not able to meet the demand for services due to the current tight labor market in Massachusetts.

D) AIDS AND APPLIANCES TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY

There is a wide array of assistive devices useful for the independent living needs of the entire blind population. These devices include customized magnification devices, talking thermometers, tactile identification markers, money identifiers, Braille writing equipment, Braille or talking watches, and so on. The personal resources of many MCB consumers do not allow them to afford these aids and the Commission has been unable to meet the high demand for assistive devices. For example, a simple Braille watch costs \$75.00 and would constitute an extraordinary expense for a person living on a small pension. Hence, MCB continues to request \$225,000 yearly in order provide low-income consumers in need with assistance available from current technology.

E) ADA Drivers

The significant increase in service personnel originally made available in FY 1999 with the approval of 7.8 new workers placed a tremendous strain on a previously overloaded driver pool used to provide reasonable accommodations to blind workers and made even more important the resources necessary to provide new drivers to meet the agency's responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The agency is also requesting six more direct service workers in FY 2001; some of those hired are likely to be legally blind persons. Therefore, the request for two new drivers at an estimated cost of \$68,000 including related costs, continues to be part of the agenda and becomes even more critical.

	Description	Year One	Cumulative Year Two	Cumulative Year Three
1.	New Workers and Associated Cost	\$ 360,000	\$ 720,000	\$ 1,350,000
2.	1 Children's After Sch'l	\$ 100,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 325,000
	2.2 Children's Respite	\$ 112,500	\$ 225,000	\$ 337,500
3.	Elder Svcs and Equip	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ 550,000
4.	Ages 18-60 Homemaker	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ 60,000
5.	Independent Living Aids and Appliances	\$ 225,000	\$ 450,000	\$ 675,000
6.	ADA Drivers	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ 68,000
	Total	\$ 797,500	\$ 1,595,000	\$ 3,365,500

- 3. 4110-1010 State Supplement for SSI**
FY '98 Funding: \$8,702,564
FY '99 Funding: \$8,702,564
Current FY'2000 Funding: \$ 8,369,809
FY'01 Proposed Funding: \$ 10,223,808
Total 1-Year Increase from FY '2000: \$1,854,000
Total Expansion from FY '98 - FY01: \$ 1,854,000

<u>Increase from FY '98</u>		<u>Total Expansion from FY '98</u>
FY '99	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
FY '00	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
FY '01	\$ 1,854,000	\$ 1,854,000

In order to provide an equitable increase in the state supplement to Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which has remained flat over the past 20 years (apart from passing along federal increases), the Commission believes a 20% increase over three years (an 8 percent increase in the first year, 8 percent in the second year, and a final 4 percent increase in the third year) would have provided the SSI recipients with equity. The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind continues to request a 20% total increase in FY 2001.

- 4. 4110-2000 Deaf/Blind/Multi-Handicapped Services**
FY '98 Funding: \$5,811,340
FY '99 Funding: \$6,469,661
Current FY'2000 Funding: \$ 7,485,037
FY'01 Proposed Funding: \$ 9,152,660
Total 1-Year Increase from FY '2000: \$ 1,667,623
Total Expansion from FY '98 - FY'01: \$ 5,673,338

<u>Increase from FY '98</u>		<u>Total Expansion from FY '98</u>
FY '99	\$ 658,321	\$ 658,321
FY '00	\$ 1,673,697	\$ 2,332,018
FY '01	\$ 3,341,320	\$ 5,673,338

A) TURNING 22

The Commission expects four (4) consumers to turn 22 in Fiscal Year 2001 and thus enrolling in Massachusetts Commission for the Blind's specialty program established to serve this target population. If four is the number of consumers who enter the system, first year costs associated with properly supporting these newly engaged, severely disabled consumers will be \$315,000.

B) HOME ADAPTATIONS

There are currently 65 blind and otherwise disabled consumers who have significant need for adaptation to the homes in which they live. On average such modifications for a home costs \$6,000. The agency has allocated \$44,000 in its FY 2000 spending plan to begin to serve severely disabled consumers who have been waiting for these services. The agency is requesting an additional increase of \$56,000 in FY 2001, which will yield a total over the three years of \$144,000, which will result in services for approximately 24 consumers who are in line for these services.

C) ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY FOR BLIND-RETARDED INDIVIDUALS

The 4110-2000 account serves two populations: persons who are deaf-blind and another large group of persons who are legally blind and significantly mentally retarded, most of whom have not benefited from specialized services available through Chapter 688 (Turning 22) legislation. This initiative is addressed to the needs of the latter group. There is a continuing exodus of people who are both blind and mentally retarded out of existing Department of Mental Retardation institutions into the communities of the Commonwealth. Currently, the Department of Mental Retardation has identified some 300 consumers in Southeastern Massachusetts alone who will require intensive orientation and mobility training in the near term. We have been advised this situation exists on a statewide basis and expect the need to increase geographically, as well as numerically. \$79,000 has been allocated to hire two certified mobility instructors in FY 2000. Those instructors will be assigned to serve this special needs population in Southeastern Massachusetts. This initiative in Southeastern Massachusetts will begin late, due to the delay in the State budget, and will continue into FY 2001.

The agency proposes to begin the same kind of initiative statewide in FY 2001 to begin to meet the needs of other legally blind, mentally retarded consumers across the state. Two additional certified mobility instructors will need to be hired in FY 2001 at a cost of \$83,000. The total cost over these two years would be \$ 241,000.

D) OLDER DEAF-BLIND/MULTI-DISABLED CONSUMERS

There are 300 Deaf-Blind; Deaf-Blind/multi disabled; and Blind/mentally retarded/multi-disabled consumers who are now minimally served in this account. These blind consumers, ranging in age from 35 to 90 years, are too old to be covered by the provisions of Chapter 688, known as the Turning 22 law. For the most part, these individuals reside in the community with spouses, families, or friends. In order to ensure their continuing independence, they require services beyond what MCB is currently able to provide. The amount of \$279,000 in the first year with an additional \$220,000 per year above the base year would maintain a level of service required by these severely disabled and blind persons.

This funding amount would cover the hiring of two specialty Counselors at a total cost of \$83,000, to address the special needs and circumstances attendant to those legally blind persons who also have certain low-incidence disabilities such as Usher's Syndrome, (*congenitally Deaf and adventitiously Blind*) and Multiple Chemical Sensitivity; \$90,000 to establish a statewide network of peer support and "out of isolation" socialization and community integration services for more than 120 consumers (*6 regional programs at \$15,000 each*); the purchase of specialized equipment (*versabrailers; closed circuit TVs, etc.*) enhancing either the independent living capacity or vocational prospects of 20 deaf/blind and otherwise multi-disabled consumers, (\$60,000); \$14,000 to provide approximately 1,250 additional units of Respite Care service for 10 deaf/blind and otherwise multi-disabled consumers; and \$20,000 to enable the provision of newly developed, specialty aids and devices to 10 multi-disabled consumers at \$2,000 each, so as to maximize their use of remaining sensory capacities.

E) SPECIAL SUPPORT PROVIDERS

Deaf Blind persons have classically been forced to fragment their daily activities based upon where interpreter and other supports would be available. Therefore, it is seldom that a Deaf Blind person can look forward to a complete day of outside activities in the same way that others in our society do.

MCB should initiate a pilot program in FY 2001 to make available Special Support Providers (SSPs) to assist approximately 150 Deaf-Blind consumers so they will be able to participate more directly and meaningfully in community life. Such SSPs will provide a variety of critical services including, but not limited to, driving, minimal sign language interpreting, sighted guide and personal accompaniment, assistance with shopping and conducting personal business, and other forms of appropriate, individualized assistance. It is anticipated that over the course of a full year, some 3600 hours (@ \$15 per) of such SSP service would be delivered for a total cost of

\$54,000. It is further anticipated that necessary SSP in-service training, travel supports and related contractual expenses would raise the overall cost for this unique consumer-driven service to \$90,000 per year.

The Commission will, in cooperation with participating Deaf-Blind consumers and others, evaluate the utility of this unique program on an ongoing basis to be certain that these needy blind consumers are benefiting to the extent possible from this pilot initiative.

	Description	Year One	Cumulative Year Two	Cumulative Year Three
1.	New T-22s	\$ 450,000	\$ 1,330,000	\$ 2,525,000
2.	IL Home Adaptations	\$ -0-	\$ 44,000	\$ 144,000
3.	MR Orientation and Mobility: 3 FTE & costs	\$ -0-	\$ 160,160	\$ 295,320
	Purchase of Service	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
4.	Older DB/MD 2 FTE	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ 83,000
	Community Integration	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ 90,000
	Respite Care	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ 14,000
	IL Equipment	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ 60,000
	Sensory Aids	\$ -0-	\$ 20,000	\$ 40,000
5.	Specialized Service Providers	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ 90,000
	Totals	\$ 450,000	\$1,500,160	\$3,341,320

Please Note: The FY 2000 General Appropriations Act established a tracking account 4110-2001 for new monies made available to new clients in FY 2000. To avoid confusion within the three-year agenda, that account has not been broken out as a separate amount. However, it must be kept in mind that any of the new funds (\$430,000) not needed for new clients in FY 2000, will not be available for expenditure for any other purpose.

- 5. 4110-3010 Vocational Rehabilitation**
FY '98 Funding: \$1,436,122
FY '99 Funding: \$2,409,407
Current FY'2000 Funding: \$2,779,108
FY'01 Proposed Funding: \$ 2,779,108
Total 1-Year Increase from FY '2000: \$ 0
Total Expansion from FY '98 - FY'01: \$3,659,257

<u>Increase from FY '98</u>		<u>Total Expansion from FY '98</u>
FY '99	\$ 973,285	\$ 973,285
FY '00	\$ 1,342,986	\$ 2,316,271
FY '01	\$ 1,342,986	\$ 3,659,257

GAINING AND MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT

This account, in part, supports the Technology for the Blind program at MCB. This is the program that provides employers with job site analysis and adaptations to workplace technology, along with training and equipment and software for blind employees, job seekers and students. This set of services and equipment is critical to the success of the employment aspirations of hundreds of blind persons.

As the workplace has moved away from the classic DOS based environment to the graphically based computing world, there is a severe need for MCB to assist consumers with whatever existing and developing technologies that may help them to gain, retain, or move forward in employment. The speed of technological development and introduction of new user interfaces that are foreign to past adaptive solutions, has caused a major drain on MCB's ability to properly service both the employer and consumer communities, to the point where job opportunities may be lost and employer/employee relations strained. The agency will need \$ 1,250,000 per year to maintain research and development and a rapid engineering/hardware/software response to technological problems that far too often leave jobs hanging in the balance.

Referrals to the Technology for the Blind program had averaged 316 per year over a number of years, with an average yearly increase of 7%. As a result of the recent adaptability of Windows '95, numerous employed blind persons have required assistance in the re-adaptation of DOS based workstations to Windows '95, Windows NT and associated applications. In recent years this has resulted in an additional 50 to 60 referrals to a program that has frequently experienced delays in service provision as a result of the workload. In addition, Windows-based applications frequently require 50% to 75% more time for both adaptation and consumer training due to the numerous screens and

applications that must be customized for speech and large print use. In addition, the advent of scanning technology, coupled with the importance of providing computer access and training to college students in all fields of study, has further strained the capacity of the Technology for the Blind Program to adequately meet consumer need.

Additionally, in the rapidly changing world of technology and adaptive technology, it is vitally important that the Technology for the Blind personnel regularly attend training seminars and conferences (*where new but not yet released applications and adaptations are often demonstrated*), to insure the ongoing development necessary to the provision of service.

With regard to ADA requirements: Technology for the Blind staff are typically called upon to provide services upon the tender of a job offer. At that time the prospective employer is encouraged to provide the required adaptive equipment, with MCB providing the installation and required training. Often large companies and corporations will do so. Small businesses, which employ most of the agency's consumers, are often not able to comply with this request, in which case MCB provides both equipment and rehabilitation engineering services, so as not to lose the job for the consumer.

- 6. 4110-4000 Ferguson Industries for the Blind**
FY '98 Funding: \$1,693,021
FY '99 Funding: \$1,675,811
Current FY'2000 Funding: \$1,698,152
FY'01 Proposed Funding: \$ 1,980,911
Total 1-Year Increase from FY '2000: \$23,144
Total Expansion from FY '98 - FY01: \$287,890

Increase from FY '98

Total Expansion from FY '98

FY '99	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
FY '00	\$ 5,131	\$ 5,131
FY '01	\$ 282,759	\$ 287,890

Ferguson Industries for the Blind provides employment opportunities through production facilities employing 36 multiply impaired blind persons in the production of, mops, brooms, pillowcases, adult bibs, children's bibs, pens and sub-contract work. In addition the program provides Medical Transcription services to the Federal Government, State Agencies and a small number of private customers. Revenue generated by these activities returns directly to the Commonwealth.

The increased funding above would enable Industries to expand its product line, maintain and expand existing employment opportunities to a growing pool of multiply impaired blind persons and replace and repair aging equipment, some of which has been in operation since 1906.